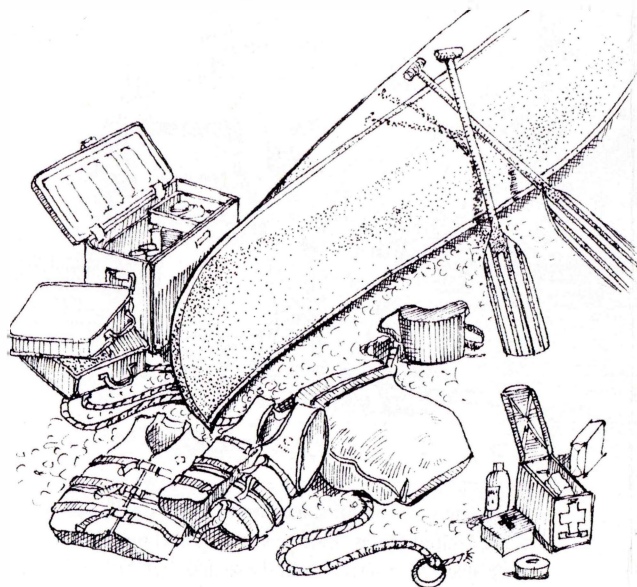


## River rules to live by

Remember, rivers and streams are not tame regardless of how beautiful and inviting they seem. They are wild and can be a threat to your safety and that of your family. The footing is insecure. Depths can vary greatly over very short distances. Obstructions that create powerful eddy and undertow currents often are hidden.

Many people lose their lives each year due to carelessness around rivers and other waters. Even people with good river skills can become victims of unforeseen circumstances. Swift and powerful currents can sweep good swimmers into root wads or submerged boulders. Fast moving waters can propel canoes into rocks, trees and submerged objects. Learn to recognize the potential power of the river, and avoid dangerous circumstances.



## Think safety on Missouri's streams and rivers

- ✓ Always wear a life jacket
- ✓ Use common sense
- ✓ Avoid over-confidence
- ✓ Be aware of unforeseen circumstances

During winter, the Missouri Water Patrol presents safety programs throughout the state, including a five-day water safety course, which is given annually in many high schools and middle schools. For more information, call the Water Patrol at 573/751-3333.



Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180,  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65102-0180

FIS 724

# Be River Wise

Missouri's streams and rivers are wild and should be respected. Practice these safety guidelines to prevent accidents while enjoying the outdoors.





## Use Common Sense

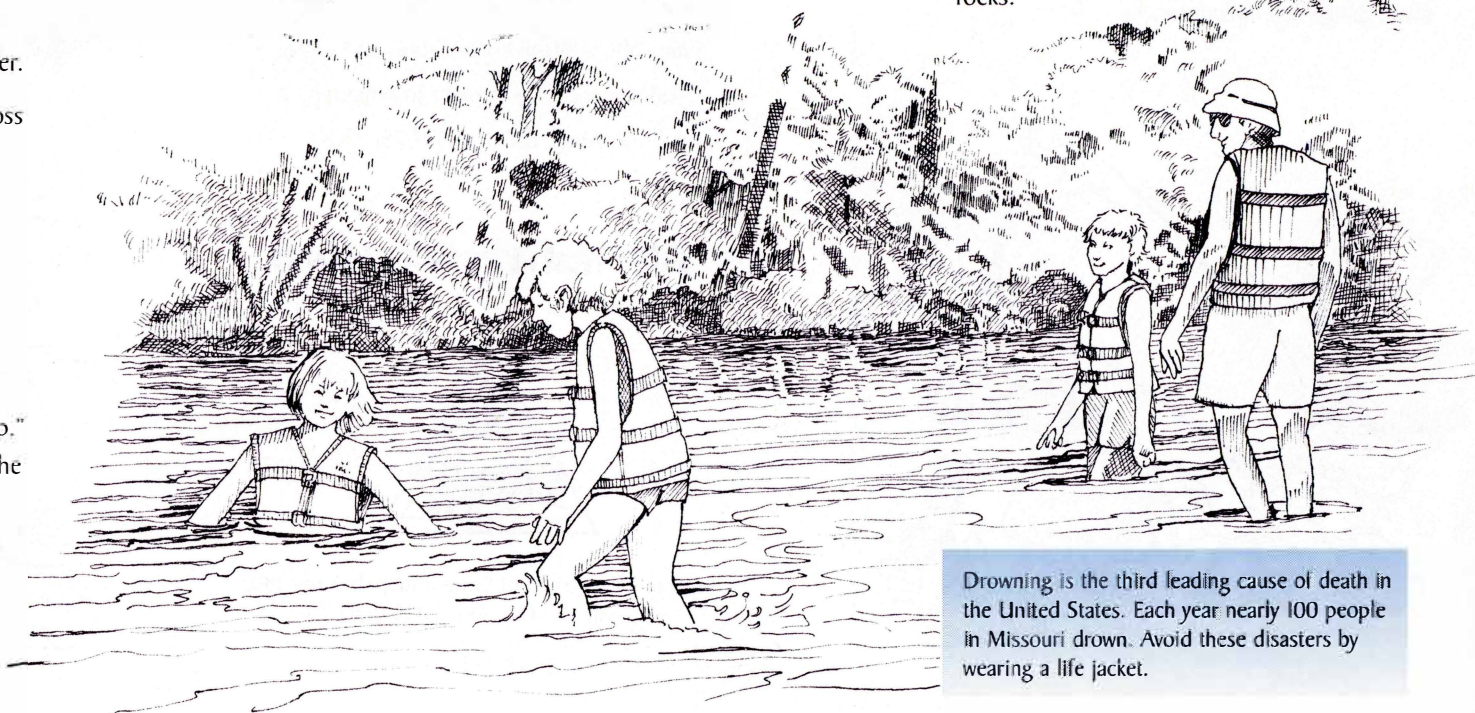
- ▶ When swimming or boating in a river or stream, make certain everyone in your family wears a life jacket. Even the strongest swimmers drown when they become trapped against obstructions or tired from fighting the current.
- ▶ Never swim alone. Always swim with a buddy and look out for each other.
- ▶ Before swimming in an unknown area, check for potential dangers, such as drop-offs, boulders, root wads, submerged trees or abandoned fishing lines.
- ▶ Do not swim in areas with heavy boat traffic, including areas in front of boat ramps.
- ▶ Make sure an adult who is a qualified swimmer supervises small children when they are in the water. A life jacket is neither a child sitter nor a guarantee of safety. If you have to take a break, make the kids get out of the water.
- ▶ Stay away from culverts or where roads cross streams. You may drown if you are trapped inside or against a culvert.
- ▶ Keep a life-ring with a long rope attached nearby in case of trouble.
- ▶ Avoid swimming in sections of a stream where gravel is mined.
- ▶ Never swim when the river or stream is "up." You can tell if it is flooded by looking along the banks. If you see totally or partially flooded terrestrial vegetation, stay out of the water.

## Avoid Over-Confidence

- ▶ Alcohol use and water sports can be a fatal combination. Alcohol can turn normally careful and cautious people into ones who take chances or try to do things beyond their ability.
- ▶ Avoid people who seem overly confident about a river. People who are familiar with rivers respect them. They don't take chances because they know what rivers can do, how quickly something can happen and how unforgiving rivers can be.
- ▶ Beware of fatigue. A river with its fast-moving water and sometimes sandy or gravel bottom can be dangerous if you become tired. Give yourself a rest and insist the children you are watching take a break. Always get out of the water if you experience cramping or tightening muscles.

## Be Aware of Unforeseen Circumstances

- ▶ Never assume what was a good swimming hole last year is one this year. Floods can alter the river leaving sunken trees or gravel deposits. Even manmade obstacles such as car bodies or barrels may wash into a favorite swimming spot.
- ▶ Watch closely for derelict fishing gear and keep a pocket knife handy to cut a line. Swimmers tangled in or hooked by abandoned fishing gear, such as trotlines, may drown.
- ▶ Remember that the river current adds new dimension to maneuvering boats and canoes. A boat being carried down the river with the current can severely injure or kill a swimmer. A half-sunken canoe is impossible to maneuver and can pin you against logs or rocks.



Drowning is the third leading cause of death in the United States. Each year nearly 100 people in Missouri drown. Avoid these disasters by wearing a life jacket.